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LOOK! St Albans **our community voice on design**

Minutes

Look! St Albans 2nd representatives' group meeting held on Monday 24th February 2014 at 7:30 The County Constitutional Club (St Albans) Limited, 29 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3AG

Secretary established that there was a quorate in place.

Members present

Fiona Couper, David Lloyd, Mel Hilbrow, Graeme Eastham, Alan McCartney, John Hoad, Vanessa Gregory, Chris Debenham, James Gregory, Tim Leicester, Councillor Beric Read, Anthony Oliver, Mike Hartley and Helen Bishop

Apologies for absence

Councillor Daly, David Ellis, John Metcalf substituted by Mike Hartley, Donald Munro substituted by Helen Bishop.

Chairman's Address and comments

Chairman opened the meeting at 7.40pm and welcomed everyone and substitute members Helen Bishop from Arc & Arc and Mike Hartley St Albans Cycle campaign

Vanessa said she wished to make some comments at start of meeting as she wanted to ensure that all representatives had an equal opportunity to speak on agenda items and proposed measures to try to ensure this happened. The previous venue had presented some hearing difficulties for some.

Vanessa had been invited by The Mayor to meet with her in The Mayor's parlour to discuss Look! Albans, as the Mayor had felt rather frustrated that she hadn't been able to attend any of our meetings. She was most generous with her time and thoroughly enjoyed looking through our workshop report. The concept of the design codes really caught her eye in view of her recent visits to our twin towns. She was extremely enthusiastic and supportive about what we have done and are proposing to do and promised to spread the word. She had wanted to observe the meeting tonight to demonstrate her support, but unfortunately the Mayoral diary did not permit.

Vanessa had also had a further meeting with Alina Congreve, Principal Lecturer: sustainable planning at University of Hertfordshire and was keen to build Look!'s relationship with the university.

Vanessa had also been deeply encouraged by the analysis of those who had attended our AGM. People from Harpenden, Redbourn, London Colney, the Verulam estate, Marshalswick and Batchwood had attended thus proving the wide spread interest in our project and indeed concern about our city centre was district wide.

Vanessa had also been encouraged by the number of hits on our Scribd website; including 212 hits on the constitution, 87 on the MoU, 149 on 'What is Look! St Albans and 1,774 hit on our design workshop report. Our agenda for tonight had 43 hits and our January meeting agenda had 90 hits.

Vanessa gave advance notice that she would like to raise an AOB item on arranging another 'informal gathering', probably in a pub for easy conversations. These are specifically for supporters to ask reps group member's questions or indeed hopefully offer assistance with specialised skills for our working parties, in a friendly relaxed setting. She thought it also demonstrates Look! St Albans is always listening to the voice of the community on design. Therefore if the group agreed she would ask the secretary to arrange and include details in his proposed mail shot to our supporters.

Finally Vanessa asked John Hoad on the progress on the signing of MOU with the council action point from our last meeting. John Hoad advised that the Head of Planning was very busy but he would press him to finalise.

***Update** the Chairman and Head of Planning subsequently met and signed the MOU jointly on the 27th February.*

Minutes: To confirm the minutes of meeting No. 1 of the representatives group held on 13th January 2014.

The minutes were approved by those present without amendments and the Chairman signed the minutes.

Deputy Chairman's comments

The deputy chair had no important matters to report to colleagues at this meeting.

Treasurer update: to include a vote to approve banking arrangements please see draft resolutions below

The Treasurer advised that he had investigated banking with Barclays or Nat West and the proposals for each bank were attached to the meeting agenda for consideration.

As Barclays offered on line checking of balances and they had been very helpful with application, he would recommend that we use them. However it was up to the reps group to decide which bank.

The preference of the reps group was Barclays. Mel Hilbrow formally proposed and Anthony Oliver seconded and the proposal below was accepted unanimously.

Barclay's proposal adopted

The Meeting considered the Barclays Customer Agreement and other documents which the Bank has provided and resolved that:-

1. Look! St Albans ("LSA") appoints Barclays Bank PLC ("the Bank") as Look! St Albans bankers;
2. LSA accepts the terms of the Barclays Customer agreement and confirms such acceptance to the Bank by completing the Bank's form of Appointment of Bankers;
3. LSA authorise any individual notified to the Bank (an "authorised person") to:-
 - (a) enter into any other agreements with the Bank (including banking facility agreements and indemnities) which they consider to be in the interests of LSA from time to time; and
 - (b) give instructions concerning the operation of LSA's bank accounts and otherwise communicate with the Bank in each case in writing or verbally, in accordance with the Customer Agreement; and
 - (c) register LSA for the Bank's computer and telephone banking services.

The RG also noted that if Look! St Albans registered for the Bank's computer and telephone banking services, any of the authorised person(s) acting in accordance with the current approval processes for the services would be responsible for amending 'Look! St Albans customer profile' which (among other things) determines:-

- (a) the accounts that can be accessed by computer or telephone;
- (b) security procedures and the number of individuals required to approve each instruction issued to the Bank (approval processes);
- (c) the individuals ("users") allowed to use the service for making payments and other purposes (within any specified limits)

The group also noted that the Bank is entitled to act on all instructions given by a user in accordance with the correct security procedures, until the company notifies the appropriate computer or telephone banking service that the user is no longer authorised to act for it.

Funding

The Treasurer advised that he had been investigating various funding ideas.

This included entering into a neighbourhood partnership agreement which allowed some government funding.

A general discussion took place the Res Republica report was mentioned. It was felt that some of the funding opportunities required a full constituted group organised by the local council. We do not fit into that category.

Deputy Chairman mentioned that he had approached the Hertfordshire LEP for funding, he would chase for a response.

Other suggestions for organisations that might provide funding were The Rowntree Foundation and Herts Community Foundation.

The Chairman mentioned that when negotiating the costs of Charettes with developers we should take into account that the cost of a community volunteer had be estimated at £360 a

day so members the reps group are in effect contributing to the process in a number of ways.

No suggestion was made that members would be paid or indeed ask to be paid, just that their involvement can be costed and offset. The group learnt that the council cost volunteers at two thirds of the National wage.

The generally feeling was that we would need a fund of several thousand pounds to cover general annual running costs as well as in hand funding for community contributions to any Charette process.

Treasurer proposed and Deputy Chair seconded membership of CVS at a cost of £20 per annum. Membership would ensure we kept in touch with other groups and also be able to access training for fundraising etc. This was agreed.

Website and website funding was also discussed;

Website designers such as WordPress who offer a no frills simple solution, but we had no experts in the room who could actually volunteer to design one.

We should consider other websites such as West Hampstead community project (Neighbourhood Forum) to use as a possible template.

Deputy Chairman and Alan McCartney have contacts at Oaklands College who might consider designing one as student project.

Chairman reminded the group that a working party on funding had been set up and all reps group members should feel free to feed into this with suggestions or indeed join the group.

Secretary's update including investigations into insurance

As requested at the last meeting the Secretary had contacted Lark Insurance Group and had received a proposal form to enable obtaining a quotation for Professional Liability.

After a general discussion it was agreed that we would also need Public Liability Insurance. Although many venues we held our meetings were already covered, should we hold events outside such cover would be necessary.

Secretary agreed to request a quotation for this sort of cover too.

The secretary distributed copies of 'Draft guidance for Look! St Albans working parties' for comment and subsequently sent out copies via email for comment as he did not expect a decision at this meeting.

A short discussion took place and the reps group agreed to look at the draft guidance and make comments at the next meeting. Although it was agreed that working parties would not have authority to spend money, as such decisions would have to be made by the reps group.

Note: No further comments have been received via email on the draft guidance document.

Proposal by Chairman Vanessa Gregory

Community Feedback (short working party)

Aim and Objective; as it is best practice on community engagement to ensure all views are recorded; we should review feedback from the open meeting on 20th March 2013.

Purpose: Ensure all views are recorded in a user friendly manner, published and our supporters advised.

As the format of the community engagement was on large posters the deputy chair offered the use of large tables at his office in STANTA for easier analysis.

Collating would involve ensuring comments matched the right sections of our design workshop report updated Jan 2013 report.

This work would require a few hours intensive copying and making notes; noting factual comments, not interpreting but capturing their comments and putting into easily readable format.

Graeme Eastham and James Gregory volunteered to assist Vanessa Gregory

Proposal by Chairman Vanessa Gregory

Can we propose any innovative ways to get our key messages to the community?

Two key messages are:

- 1) Understanding why part funding of charrettes etc by developers is necessary and appropriate.
- 2) Understanding that viability for a new development the issues are not purely economic, *though fundamental*, but also include social and natural/environmental. This is set out in our Community Capital Framework on page 15 of the workshop report.

Chairman handed copies of Community Capital Framework to the reps group

A general discussion ensued and it was felt that the publicity working party should consider these issues.

Chairman highlighted she was the only volunteer at last meeting could she please have some more volunteers.

Mel Hilbrow and Anthony Oliver offered some help.

Proposal by Graeme Eastham

"A discussion of the form that consultation with LSA should take. After the discussion LSA should write to SADC expressly setting out its terms of consultation.

Aims, objectives and purpose

To ensure that all members of the Steering Group and SADC understand the form LSA Consultation will take.”

Graeme articulated concerns he had after reading the constitution. These concerns included Look! proposed method of engagement was too rigid and would not encourage developers to engage the community through Look! St Albans. He also outlined his concerns that Look! would ‘inform’ the developer of costs involved and the developers would not be actively involved in planning the charrette process. All sites would not merit a charrette process. Legally community consultation was only required on large development sites.

A general discussion took place.

It was agreed small sites would prove insufficiently viable to hold a charrette process; for example a change of shop front obviously would not warrant a charrette process. Although some members expressed concern that our draft design codes *should* be available and used by developers on all sizes of developments within our city centre.

It was felt that a charrette process would be flexible in length and number of independent facilitators required to prove to be a flexible tool.

Many members tried to reassure that an agreement would need to be entered into with a developer on a charrette process. This would set out quite clearly what both parties could expect from each other, including scope and costings. Look! St Albans had no power to force a developer to engage the community at the pre application stage through us. We could only hope, with the direction of travel in non-statutory guidance and our MoU with the council that developers’ would see the benefits both financially and in probability of shortening the length of planning process that early engagement would offer.

The chairman suggested a protocol may needed to be drawn up and freely available on how Look! should deal with an informal or formal approach from a landowner/developer.

Proposal by Graeme Eastham

“A discussion as to whether or not distillation of the Design Code document is desirable (brought forward from the previous meeting).

Aims, objectives and purpose

To reinstate for discussion an item that could not be discussed fully at the previous meeting’ and ‘whilst taking care to acknowledge that the original document has been consulted upon the steering group should decide whether or not a distilled version should be made available to all”.

It was agreed that the suggestion should be looked into as a marketing tool in the publicity and events working party.

AOB: *Any substantial items not previously advised to the secretary with wording will be discussed at a future meeting of the reps group.*

The Chairman proposed another informal gathering in a pub to encourage people to come and discuss any concerns or ask questions with members of the reps group. Also this would give those wishing to volunteer for working parties an opportunity to get a feel for the time commitment and work involved.

The reps group agreed this was a good idea and a suitable date should be considered and agreed outside the meeting.

Note: It was agreed outside the meeting that Monday 24th March was a suitable date and a gathering took place from 7pm at the Waterend Barn.

Set date and venue for the next reps group meeting

Monday 28th April 2014. It was agreed the current venue was highly suitable for our meetings and next meeting should hopefully be held here again (The County Constitutional Club).

Note: Venue confirmed post meeting

Meeting ended at 10:10 pm

These minutes were approved by those present and signed by the chairman at the 3rd meeting of the representatives' group on Monday 19th May 2014

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Chair Look! St Albans Our Community Voice on Design